

Message Text

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ACTION AF-08

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PASS DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: CG, ECON, ELAB, PINS

SUBJECT: LABOR TROUBLES

REF: A) LUBUMBASHI 096 B) KINSHASA 5372 C) KINSHASA 5395

D) KINSHASA 5549

1. ZAIRE'S MAJOR ENTERPRISES IN SHABA PROVINCE NARROWLY AVOIDED SECOND ROUND OF STRIKES SET FOR JULY 16. AFTER OBTAINING A 50 ZAIRE PER WORKER ONE-TIME BONUS LAST MONTH (REF A), GECAMINES' WORKERS HAD SET STRIKE DEADLINE FOR LAST FRIDAY IF FURTHER GRIEVANCES, MOSTLY REVOLVING AROUND WAGES, NOT MET. HOWEVER, MANAGEMENT REPORTEDLY PRODUCED 30 ZAIRE BONUS IN NICK OF TIME, AND WORKERS CALLED OFF SCHEDULED WALKOUT. WORKERS AT SNCZ ALSO OBTAINED BONUS, WHICH MAY IN FACT BE PERMANENT INCREASE.

2. OTHER LABOR PROBLEMS LOOM ON HORIZON. WORKERS AT MIBA, THE MAJOR DIAMOND PRODUCER, HAVE THREATENED A JOB ACTION WITHIN NEXT FEW WEEKS. BOKONGA, MINISTER OF LABOR, WAS DISPATCHED TO KASAI TO SETTLE DISPUTE, AND MOBUTU FOLLOWED ON JULY 18.

3. COMMENT: STRIKES HAVE CAUSED CONSIDERABLE ANXIETY AT TOP LEVELS OF GOZ. DURING LAST MONTH'S ROUND, SEC GEN'L OF UNTZA

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KIKONGI AND MIN LABOR BOKONGA WERE CALLED HOME FROM ILO

CONFERENCE IN GENEVA TO DEAL WITH STRIKERS, AND MOBUTU PERSONALLY RECEIVED GECAMINES AND SNCZ DELEGATIONS ON PRESIDENTIAL YACHT. IN JUNE 25 SPEECH (REF D) MOBUTU DWELLED HEAVILY UPON WORKER GRIEVANCES, CONDEMNED SHABA STRIKES, AND THREATENED TO FIRE WORKERS WHO REPEATED SUCH ACTIONS. AND MOBUTU'S VISIT THIS PAST WEEK TO SHABA AND GECAMINES SITES AT TIME OF STRIKE NOTICE OBVIOUSLY NOT PURE COINCIDENCE.

4. CONSISTENT DEMAND OF STRIKERS HAS BEEN FOR LIBERAL INTERPRETATION OF 20 PERCENT WAGE INCREASE THAT GOZ OFFERED IN WAKE OF DEVALUATION. BY DECREE, 20 PERCENT TO APPLY ONLY TO WORKERS EARNING MINIMUM WAGE AND TO CERTAIN WELL-PAID CADRES, WITH OTHERS RECEIVING LESSER INCREASES. WORKERS' DEMANDS HAVE GENERALLY CALLED FOR 20 PERCENT (OR MORE) INCREASE ACROSS THE BOARD, WITH SIMILAR INCREASE IN BONUSES AND OTHER ALLOWANCES. SO FAR GOZ REACTION HAS BEEN STOP-GAP, MONTH TO MONTH RESPONSES TO IMMINENT THREATS, BUT NO MEDIUM OR LONG-TERM SETTLEMENTS. CONTINUING PATTERN OF CONCESSIONS APPEARS TO BE PRODUCING RIPPLE EFFECT, WHICH GOZ WILL HAVE TO WATCH VERY CLOSELY IF WAGE RESTRAINTS OUTLINED IN IMF STABILIZATION AGREEMENT ARE TO BE MAINTAINED.
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